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MAXIMS AND MARKETS.

IT is not always that “apt alliteration’s artful aid” is of any great value in grave political controversies. An alliterative phrase is like the girl of the nursery rhyme, who, “When she was good, was very, very good, and when she was bad she was horrid.” Yet a phrase that captures the public mind and ear is often more than half a battle “Fifty-four-forty, or fight,” was once more potent than Senatorial debates in a famous dispute with England.

General Harrison has recently suggested an alliteration which is doing valuable service in the pending conflict of the two great political parties. He describes men with free trade tendencies as men who have studied maxims rather than markets. This is a happy characterization of nearly all political theorists—of the ideologists, as Napoleon termed them.

The men of maxims evolve their theories as the German philosopher evolved his camel—out of their inner consciousness. They abound in noble sentiments, as did Sir Joseph Surface, without condescending to conform their conduct or theories to the facts of life. From their St. Simon’s pillar they look down with lofty self-sufficiency on the toilers in the market place. This trait, indeed, is their only common characteristic whether posing as saints, exploding as anarchists, or “ballooning it” as Mug-wumps, they always look down with contempt on the men and parties who, even if their creed seems of the earth earthy, do render the earth habitable and life worth living.

For the problems of politics are not worked out of such stuff as dreams are made of, but by plans founded on the experience of nations and of centuries. If we may define statesmanship, it seems to be experience codified, made tangible and applied to the exigencies of national life. It deals, not with theories, not with nebulous, poetic imaginings and aspirations, but with concrete

social facts and forces. Its trail is not an acrobat's invisible wire, but a firm rock-hewn path, lighted by the unflickering lamp of history. The form of the dreamer's ideal may be artistic and pleasing to the eye of faith that can see it, while the image of the statesman may be rude, and rough hewn, but the bloodless vision vanishes with the cock crow, while the worker continues from century to century. And it is exactly in proportion as they deal with facts and not theories—as they consult the market instead of the oracle—that national leaders leave their impress on their generation, and that civilization is established and extended from zone to zone—from protoplasm to America.

The men of maxims in America to-day have erected a golden calf, before which they fall down and worship. They are longing, if not for the flesh pots of Egypt, at least for the drygoods of Europe. Their new evangel teaches that the end and aim of statesmanship is to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. They even preach this pawnbroker's gospel in the name of Christianity. It is not Christianity, only, however, the absurd and morbid sentiment that proclaims it a duty to send aid and comfort to distant and unfriendly peoples—"tooth brushes and red shirts to the savages in Central Africa"—while it remains indifferent to the welfare of family and home.

The men of the markets, on the contrary, believe that the duties we owe to our own household and people should take precedence of all other moral obligations. Justice, like charity, should begin at home. After we have found work and food and clothing, and fit lodgings for our own people, and not till then, should a nation be expected to take any cognizance of the world outside of its own borders.

These truths are especially pertinent to the free trade issue now forced upon us. The men of maxims say we can buy foreign goods cheaper than we can make them. Possibly we can do so in some cases, judging by the price list; but these lists do not reckon the cost of providing for the millions now profitably employed in established industries, whom the heartless policy of supplanting American by European products would render idle and homeless and hungry. It is by omitting such expenses that the price of foreign goods *seems* cheaper to us. For, all the glittering sophistries of the men of maxims cannot blot out the self-evident fact that for the foreign labor woven and spun into imported

fabrics an equal amount of American labor must inevitably be displaced, and that in one way or another this displaced labor must be supported by us.

Nothing can more clearly illustrate the truth of General Garrison's remark than the results recently reached by the gentlemen of the majority of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives. Were these gentlemen acquainted with the intricacies and necessities of the industries they were tampering with ? No ; the entire Ways and Means Committee of the Democratic wing, charged with the fabrication of the Mills Bill, could boast of but one business man, and that man, Congressman Scott, whose whole soul, as the trusted representative of the President, was bent upon passing the Mills Bill in any guise, at any cost. Can we wonder, then, at the headless and heedless propagation of fictitious and fallacious tariff theories by the Democratic members of this Congress ? The Mills Bill is a travesty on common sense to an extent that would have turned every man's hand against it had there been any prospect of its becoming law, or had the vote been taken in any other than a presidential year. It was made to foster and protect the "home industry" of manufacturing votes, and the Congressional votes given for it were not given as signs of approval of this wretched measure. They were given to a bill intended to fraudulently resemble a fulfillment of the wrinkled and tramp promises of the Democratic Party. On the eve of election something had to be done ; some bill had to be passed. Votes were "corralled," right and left, by unlimited tinkering at the bill until it can hardly have been recognized by its own father.

But, say our Democratic friends, the Mills Bill is not a free trade bill. True, it is not, in the strict sense of the term, but it is a reckless step in that direction, and it is time to call a halt ; and, without "waving the bloody shirt," we may well ponder upon the expediency of intrusting the interests of vast Northern industries to men of maxims, who happen, in this case, to be chiefly Southern brigadiers, and who solicit the suffrages of the American people for a crude conglomeration of hazardous and untested experiments.

Said a great English statesman and political economist to me, at the time of the resumption of specie payments : "Why, it is contrary to all laws of political economy."

"The American people," I replied, "do not care much for the laws of political economy; they have been making their own laws for some time, and only look to results." The results have spoken for themselves.

Does the American laborer ask whether he is being governed by the maxims or theories of Adam Smith? No; he asks what wages he receives and what comforts he enjoys under different systems. He knows that the wages of unskilled laborers and manufacturers have averaged more with us since the great era of protection began than they ever averaged before. He knows that, before that time, they averaged one dollar a day, and that, since that time, they have averaged as high as one dollar and forty cents. The same may be said of the machinists in iron and steel works. They know the hard facts that, against their former one dollar and seventy-five cents, they have received an average as high as two dollars and fifty cents. So, too, the cotton weavers know that, against their former wages of seventy-five cents, they have earned as high an average as one dollar and twenty-five cents. And thus the cases could be multiplied.

We are constantly confronted by the man of maxims with the oft-told tale that clothes will be so much cheaper when we enter upon the golden era of free trade. No better, and no more humorous answer to this assertion can be given than was recently supplied in the House of Representatives by that brilliant speaker, Major McKinley, of Ohio. The incident occurred, as may be remembered, from the assertion of Major McKinley, that a certain class of goods could be produced in this country at a sufficiently low price to produce men's clothing at ten dollars a suit. At this stage of the proceedings appeared Mr. Leopold Morse, the popular Democratic Congressman and clothier of Boston. This gentlemen having questioned the assertion, Major McKinley, as by a magician's wand, promptly produced a suit from the recesses of his desk. Mr. Morse, being still unconvinced, called for the name of the firm that could furnish such suits at such prices in this country. Whereupon, Mr. McKinley produced the receipted bill of Leopold Morse & Co.! Nothing could have been neater or more convincing to the practical voters, although it may have failed to convince the men of maxims.

Workingmen are not blind to the fact that, while wages have been rising under the fostering influence of a protective tariff,

necessaries have been greatly cheapening. When the man of maxims can persuade the workingman that he does not buy his flour, his corn, his salt beef, his salt pork, his sugar, his butter, his cheese, etc., at a lower price than he did when his daily wages were far lower, then may we expect to see the majority of American workingmen voting in the direction of free trade. To-day, however, millions of toilers still firmly repudiate the man of maxims, and doubt, with Mr. Lincoln, the wisdom of swapping horses while crossing the stream, and of abandoning or reversing the great financial and industrial policies under which they and the nation have prospered so marvelously since the close of the war.

The men of maxims teach that new lands like ours should devote themselves to the cultivation of the raw material for the older lands to manufacture.

This experiment has been tried for more than a century within our own borders. The wisdom of the men of the market has been justified by the result. Virginia and the other Southern States, endowed by nature with every kind of natural riches—a fruitful soil, splendid harbors, navigable rivers, a fructifying climate, and minerals inexhaustible—the South devoted her energies to the cultivation of the raw material. Virginia, once the premier state, is now, and before the war was, far down in the lower ranks of the roll of the Union. Massachusetts, whose chief natural products were ice and granite, devoted her energies to manufactures and diversified her industries. And as the result she and her other New England sisters are now among the most prosperous and wealthiest communities of Christendom. The men of the market may be plodders, but their work is among the highest achievements of the human race. In the grand march of progress, it is always the men of the market who lead the fashion. The men whose shoes never leave the earth are surer guides than the men with winged feet.

Singularly enough—or, perhaps, regarding the texture of their minds, I should rather say naturally enough—the men of theoretical maxims seem to abhor the practical maxims that generations of experience have crystallized into proverbs. Ages of conflict, armed and verbal, have shown the wisdom of the maxim: “Find out what your enemy wants you to do, and then don’t do it.” Our great enemy in the battle for commercial supremacy now in progress is England. Mr. Gladstone himself

has said in this REVIEW that America would wrest from England her commercial primacy. When we regain our former supremacy on the seas and win the mastery of the world's market—which, sooner or later, we are sure to do—England will be relegated to the rank of a second or third class power; for our national wealth so far exceeds hers that, equal on the seas and in the market, she could not long continue the contest with us. Providence favors the richest estates as well as the heaviest battalions. Now what does England desire us to do?

England, as an industrial power, is the most selfish and the shrewdest nation of modern times. Regardless of the interests of other nations, she always favors and fosters any policy that is calculated to advance British interests. "Business is business," is a maxim of English origin.

What then does England desire us to do? To establish free trade—to open our markets to the unobstructed and untaxed competition of her manufactures. Hon. Thomas H. Dudley, formerly American Consul at Liverpool, an intelligent observer of wide experience, shows that within one single year one single English club—the Cobden Club—distributed no less than seven hundred thousand of their tracts in the United States, especially in the Western States, thus endeavoring to arouse a new sectional spirit in the Union in the interests of free trade. The same club selects free trade professors in American colleges for marks of distinction, and offers prizes to students for free trade essays. In a special report, issued to members only, as quoted by Mr. Dudley, the manager of the Cobden Club said:

"In the United States the exertions of your committee have had the effect to bring free exchange to the front as one of the great questions of the day. Your committee continues to afford all the assistance in their power to those who are laboring in the free trade cause in foreign countries. In America, in the progress of political events there is great promise. . . . The result of turning public attention in this direction is seen in the fact that revenue reform has become a leading question in the Presidential contest and is on the winning side."

Mr. Dudley on the same occasion quotes the *London Times* as saying: "It is to the new world that the Cobden Club is chiefly looking as the most likely sphere for its vigorous foreign policy. It has done what it can in Europe and is now turning its eyes

westward and bracing itself for the struggle which is to come. *It cannot rest while the United States are unsubdued.*"

England, our rival always, our friend in business never, desires us to adopt the policy of free trade. The men of maxims here say Aye. The men of the market say No.

ALLEN THORNDIKE RICE.